

ALEXANDER WANG X COCO CHANEL

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Introduction

What comes to mind when you think of the word fashion? Some people think of it as its definition describes, “a popular trend, especially in styles of dress.” Others just think of clothes and shopping but I like to think of it as a way of self expression through appearance and taste. Everyone has a different sense of fashion depending on who they are as a person. Throughout the years we have seen fashion develop and become completely different from what it was in the 1800s and 1900s. From the s-curve silhouette and tight corsets to loose pants as well as long dust coats to shorter ones, fashion has changed dramatically and will continue to keep on changing. Alexander Wang is one out of many American designers to contribute to the growth of fashion and allow others to show off his designs. Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel or “Coco Chanel” is a French designer who created a huge change to the fashion world. Although both designers have very different designs and signature looks, they both have similarities on certain things and have had great influences in the fashion industry.

Alexander Wang

“Anyone can get dressed up and glamorous, but it is how people dress on their days off that are the most intriguing.” This quote has been said by none other than fashion designer, Alexander Wang. Born to Taiwanese parents on December 26, 1983 in San Francisco, California Alexander Wang has worked his way up in the fashion industry and has created a signature look for his brand. First attending a summer program at Central Saint Martins located in London to eventually studying at Drew School in San Francisco, California (FFD). Years later after turning eighteen, Wang moved to New York and studied at Parsons School of Design for two years. During the time in school he was working for Teen Vogue, Vogue, as well as gaining experience

by being an apprentice to Marc Jacobs and Derek Lam (FFD). He later dropped out of college to pursue the start of his own brand.

At the age of fifteen, Wang showed off his first designs which consisted of 35 outfits made for his sister in law at his brother's wedding (TFS). He started off with cashmere sweaters and by 2005 launched his knitwear line and maintained it as unisex. In Spring 2007 Wang launched his first women's prêt-a-porter (ready to wear) collection and it was shown on the runway in the Fall/Winter 2007 at New York Fashion Week. Since then, Alexander Wang started gaining recognition and has won many awards, one of them being the Vogue/CFDA Fashion Fund in 2008 (CFDA). In the same year he launched a collection of handbags. In 2011 his men's ready to wear collection launched and was honored by GQ as Best Menswear designer of the year. In February of the same year he opened up his first flagship store located in Soho, New York and opened up his second one on April 2012 in Beijing, China.

As well as opening up his second flagship store, Wang was appointed creative director of Balenciaga in 2012. Balenciaga is also a fashion company and this opportunity gave Wang a chance to excel in his career. He designs both men and women clothing, accessories, footwear and has a diffusion line called T by Alexander Wang. His aesthetic consists of sportswear and model off duty with his signature grunge touch.



Alexander Wang's Fall 2007 RTW Collection (Vogue Magazine)

Target Market

Alexander Wang is a high class designer and with this, his designs are expected to be more costly than clothes at regular local stores. Wang's company targets the upper class who are able to afford his clothing items and accessories. Being that Wang's designs are modern and "hip" his target market consists of younger people from ages 25 to 40 with a higher income and more luxurious lifestyle.

Alexander Wang has collaborated with other brands and clothing stores that have made much more affordable clothing but in limited quantities. H&M and Wang collaborated back in 2014. In 2016 he first collaborated with Adidas and created a collection that consisted of 84 pieces (V Magazine). He has continued to work with them and has been designing clothes as well as shoes. In the next few months, Wang is set to collaborate with Uniqlo on a new heattech collection and it will be available at an affordable price for middle class and younger age groups interested in his designs (Forbes). These collaborations with more affordable brands help Alexander Wang's market because it is expanded by making items with his name on it available to a bigger group of people who don't have the income for his regular priced items. Along with his collaborations, Wang has also participated in a campaign with Trojan Condoms in order to raise money for LGBT sexual health programs (Bustle). This brings both recognition to his own brand because of his name but also helps inform people about more serious topics.

Style And Promotions

Alexander Wang is mostly known for his cool, street style but chic looks. Most would describe his style as "model off duty" which can be interpreted as comfortable yet stylish. His diffusion brand "T by Alexander Wang" involves more of a comfortable sporty vibe rather than his signature chic edgy looks seen on the runways. Wang uses material like leather for shoes and bags as well as rayon, cotton and wool for clothing. Most of Alexander Wang's manufacturing is

produced in Asia and the production is based in Europe. Thirty percent of the tailoring is produced in Italy while some garments for T by Alexander Wang is produced in Portugal (BOF).

Wang uses a lot of photos to advertise his products and each campaign has a different



theme to it. In his 2017 Spring campaign he uses the theme

“walk of shame” in order to show off his designs. He had

models look like they have just had a wild party night and

had them photographed looking tired from the night before.

They also include photos of models in the “party” before the

walk of

shame. In

his 2018

Spring

campaign

it consists of only the clothes but no models.

Wang had his top muse’s pick which clothing

pieces to wear and had the clothes photographed

while they gave a description of where they wore them, leaving the rest to the people’s

imagination. Besides the photography, there are also billboards around the city showing off the designer's clothing items.

Most of the merchandise can be found at Wang’s flagship stores located in Soho in New York City or his store in Beijing, China. Alexander Wang is also available in stores like Barneys, Saks Fifth Ave, Bloomingdales and many other stores including online websites.



Alexander Wang Spring 2017 “Walk of Shame” Ad Campaign (Inez and Vinoodh)

Why is Wang Important?

Alexander Wang is considered to be an important designer because of the fact that he started out when he was very young. Even though he decided to leave school, he also decided to pursue his own business and start his own brand. Wang has come across many opportunities and has used them to his advantage in order to create a name and brand for himself. He has taken the color black and has turned it into a sexy, confident color to wear while keeping it stylish. He has also taken the off duty style but turned it into something chic and fashionable even though it is also comfortable. With T by Alexander Wang he has turned sporty looking clothing items and has styled them in a way to make them look trendy and fashionable as well. Overall, I think Alexander Wang has a very unique sense of style and has also kept it true to his likings. Most of his clothing and accessories have been seen worn a lot by models and fashion bloggers\followers around the world.

Coco Chanel

Just like Alexander Wang, Coco Chanel has also influenced the fashion industry in a huge way. The little black dress is something you will find in every woman's closet. You can dress it up with heels and pearls or dress it down with sneakers. Thank you for this Coco Chanel. Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel was born on August 19, 1883 in Saumur, France. Coco Chanel's mother passed away when she was 12 years old. She grew up in poverty and father abandoned her and her three sisters in an orphanage after her mother's death. She was one out of five children and had a coquettish yet rebellious style. During her time at the orphanage she learned to sew but still wanted to get out and take control of her own life (BOF).

Within time, Chanel worked as a seamstress in Moulins sang in a bar. Her nickname "Coco" came to her after she sang a song. Coco Chanel was described as beautiful and ambitious. In 1906 she became a mistress to a French textile heir and racehorse owner. She

became a milliner for a while but then met a wealthy Englishman and fell in love. He took her to Paris and she opened her first millinery on January 1, 1910 (BOF). Chanel wanted to introduce something modern that made women feel comfortable and introduced casual knits and dresses in



Obazine Abbey. Orphanage Coco Chanel was sent to.
(Google)

Deauville in 1913. She was inspired by her lover, Boy Capel's clothing and the simplicity behind it.

By the 20s and 30s Coco Chanel was considered to be one of the greatest fashion leaders across the globe. She introduced her

fragrance Chanel No. 5 and in 1925 she introduced her Chanel suit with a collarless jacket and a well fitted skirt. She borrowed a lot of elements from menswear and emphasized on comfort. Her little black dress was another revolutionary design for the fact that she took a color related to loss and turned it into something chic and wearable for the evening. Chanel presented her new collection on February 5, 1954. Her signature style is considered to be chic and sporty yet romantic. Her legacy continues and her designs are still considered to be revolutionary.

Love Life in Fashion

Chanel's lover, Boy Chapel had a great influence on her and her take on fashion. He was her source of inspiration which helped her come out with clothing to be as modern and as comfortable for women just like how it was for men. Chanel came out with these comfortable pieces and dresses by the time World War I started which helped her because it was not seen as a time period to wear extravagant clothing (BOF). Chanel seemed to love Boy Chapel but this all

ended when he passed away in a car accident in 1919. She felt like she lost everything when he passed away because of the fact that he inspired her to branch out into new fashions and ideas. After his death, Chanel had quite a few affairs with men who had money and power. She picked these type of lovers for the fact that this would help her expand her business. Grand Duke Dimitri of Russia and Duke of Westminster were two of her next lovers she had chosen. During World War II, Chanel had a thing with Haus Gunther Von Dincklage even though it was considered treason to be with members of the German force in France (BOF). These events are the ones said to have influenced her making of the little black dress in order to turn a mourning color into something chic.

Controversy in France

The people in Paris have described Coco Chanel as coquettish and she has also shown herself to be a diva because of the fact that she wanted things done her way. Chanel had rivals in the fashion world and would object to having her clothing shown on the same pages of Patou and Schiaparelli. She would threaten to cancel her advertising if she did not have things done her way and would do anything to denigrate them and their styles (BOF). Even though Chanel acted this way, the people in France would criticize her as well mostly for being a mistress and having many lovers throughout her time. Her relationship with Haus Gunther Von Dincklage was seen as a betrayal of her country and many called her offensive names because of her relationships. Her relationship with Von Dincklage and the controversy she was facing led her to take a break from fashion and she moved on to leave Paris and live in Switzerland for a few years as well as in her country house in Roquebrune (Biography).

Chanel's Risky Comeback

When Chanel was about 71 years old she made a risky decision of coming back into the fashion industry after she took some years off to live in Switzerland and in her county home. Chanel presented her new collection on February 5, 1954. She was still being criticized by the people and the critics in the fashion world but her designs soon took off again and influenced a change in fashion. The French were still upset about her “betrayal” during the war but accepted her designs while the British and American press were impressed (BOF). Her comeback was seen as a miracle to some because of her age and the controversy and criticism she had gotten years prior to her return. Eventually Coco Chanel passed away, never married, in the year of 1971 (Biography) but she has left an incredible legacy despite her past actions and controversy.

Chanel For Who?

Coco Chanel’s designs are very high fashion as well as Wang’s. Her target market also consists of the upper class who are into looking chic but also feel powerful, fierce and comfortable. Her items are mostly for people ages 25 to 60 since the fashion company offers a variety of items from clothes to shoes, fragrances, and even makeup. Coco Chanel also offers a section of jewelry and eyewear. People with a higher income and those who are able to afford luxurious items are part of the company’s target market.

Signature Style

Chanel is known for her use of black and white, pearls and casual wear as well as her tweed jackets and little black dresses. Chanel uses fabrics like tweed, silk, and jersey. She was very inspired by menswear and decided to use jersey fabric although it was commonly used for men's underwear at first. Due to her financial situation she purchased jersey fabric because of its low cost (The MET). Silk was another fabric she used for her dress suits inspired by a masquerade party she attended. She then used it to create her little black dress known as “the

ford” as well as her silk sequin evening dresses before World War I broke out. After World War I broke out, she focused on more comfortable and stylish clothing items because it was seen as a time of chaos rather than extravagant. The source of inspiration for her new comfortable clothing items was her lover, Boy Chapel and the choice of clothes he wore.

Promotion of Merchandise

Chanel is the only company that operates its own perfume manufacturing facilities. The company is big on consistency and their packaging is their primary goal which is why they operate alone. The company has extended itself by selling fine jewelry, watches, fragrances, shoes, and even makeup and skincare products. This has created a greater width and depth for the company’s marketing mix.

The company promotes their merchandise a little differently than how Alexander Wang does it. Commercials are seen on tv for their fragrances as well as short films. Coco Chanel also advertises on billboards and on social media. Chanel items can be found at their stores located in New York and Paris as well as other retail stores that carry high end brands like Barneys, Bloomingdales and Saks Fifth Ave. Online websites also contain their merchandise and can be easier to find and purchase vintage pieces.

Importance of Coco Chanel

Coco Chanel is a very important designer because she as well as Alexander Wang started from a very young age. Chanel was left at an orphanage and had to escape in order to figure her



Chanel’s Evening Dress. (The MET)

life out and pursue to be her own person. She has overcome difficult times in her life and despite the criticism she faced throughout her career she continued to do what she could in order to become successful. Even though some of her actions were not seen as appropriate she continued to ignore what others would say and even made a risky comeback in order to prove that she is the one and only Coco Chanel leaving a legacy and inspiration for many other designers and fashion lovers.

Finale

Both Alexander Wang and Coco Chanel have given the people the option to find something that fits their personal style and makes them feel comfortable. They have impacted fashion in different ways while keeping things modern and chic. They have changed the fashion world completely through their hard work and controversy as well as their creations of new trends and their individual breakouts. Alexander Wang with his casual edgy off duty look and Chanel with her turn of black from depressing to chic and elegant. Inspiration can be taken from both of them in order to create something similar or figure out one's own personal style like they have. The fashion industry would not be the same without their designs and impact so for that, we thank them for creating and inspiring others to create.

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